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# HOW TO COMMUNICATE IN SOCIAL MEDIA?

– Instructions for PELUM Swaziland on creating  
engaging social media content in Europe



BACHELOR'S THESIS | ABSTRACT

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# HOW TO COMMUNICATE IN SOCIAL MEDIA?

- Instructions for PELUM Swaziland on creating engaging social media content in Europe

The objective of the thesis was to find the most essential content and media types of a social media post. Additionally, the aim was to discover the level of engagement of the content and media types, and to provide instructions for PELUM Swaziland regarding these elements of a social media post on the chosen social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram, within the European social media environment.

The content types focused on the research were informational and entertaining, while the media types consisted of text-only, links, pictures, and videos. Engagement was measured by adding together the likes, shares and comments of a social media post.

The quantitative research design was applied in the thesis. The data collection was conducted via comparison of the social media performance of ten medium-sized European nongovernmental organizations. The comparison measured the organizations' number of posts, content and media types as well as the engagement of the posts during a three-week period in October 2017.

The results indicate that European medium-sized nongovernmental organizations post approximately seven times a week on Facebook and four times a week on Instagram. Despite the lower frequency of posts, Instagram garners considerably higher level of engagement. The results revealed that entertaining content is highly more engaging than informative on both platforms. Moreover, videos and pictures provide significantly higher customer engagement than links on Facebook. The research found no Facebook posts that contained only text. Videos are considerably more engaging than pictures on Instagram.

According to the results, PELUM Swaziland should publish predominantly pictures and videos with two thirds of the posts containing entertaining and one third of informative content.

## KEYWORDS:

Social media, message, content types, media types, engagement, comparison, non-governmental organization

Tommi Terä

# MITEN VIESTIÄ SOSIAALISESSA MEDIASSA?

- Neuvoja PELUM Swazimaalle sitouttavan sosiaalisen median viestin sisällöstä Euroopassa

Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena on määritellä keskeisimmät sosiaalisen median viestin sisällön elementit ja medialajit. Lisäksi tavoitteena oli saada selville sisällön elementtien ja medialajien sitouttavuus ja tuottaa niiden avulla PELUM Swazimaalle ohjeet valittujen sosiaalisen median kanavien, Facebookin ja Instagramin, viestin sisällön tuottamiseen.

Sisällön elementit jaoteltiin tutkimuksessa kahteen, informatiiviseen ja viihdyttävään. Pelkkä teksti, linkit, kuvat ja videot olivat opinnäytetyössä käytettyjä medialajeja. Elementtien ja medialajien sitouttavuutta mitattiin tutkimuksessa viestin saamien tykkäysten, jakojen ja kommenttien perusteella.

Opinnäytetyö suoritettiin kvantitatiivisena tutkimuksena. Tiedonkeruu koostui kymmenen keskiuuden eurooppalaisen kansalaisjärjestön sosiaalisen median aktiviteetteja vertailemalla. Vertailussa mitattiin viestien määrä, viestien sisältö- ja medialajit sekä viestien saavuttama sitouttavuuden määrä kolmen viikon aikana lokakuussa 2017.

Tutkimustulosten mukaan keskiuuden eurooppalainen kansalaisjärjestö julkaisee viikoittain Facebookissa seitsemän ja Instagramissa neljä viestiä. Vaikka Instagramissa julkaistaan harvemmin, on Instagramin yksittäisen julkaisun sitouttavuus selkeästi Facebookin vastaavaa korkeampi. Viestin sisällön suhteen viihdyttävä oli molemmissa tutkituissa kanavissa huomattavasti informatiivista sisältöä sitouttavampaa. Medialajeista videot ja kuvat olivat selkeästi linkkejä sitouttavampia Facebookissa. Tutkimuksessa ei löytynyt yhtään ainoastaan tekstiä sisältävää Facebook-viestiä. Instagramissa videot olivat kuvia huomattavan paljon sitouttavampia.

Tutkimustulosten mukaan PELUM Swazimaan tulee julkaista valtaosaksi kuvia ja videoita, joiden sisällöstä kaksi kolmasosaa on viihdyttävää ja yksi kolmasosa informatiivista.

## ASIASANAT:

Sosiaalinen media, viesti, sisältölajit, medialajit, sitouttaminen, vertailu, kansalaisjärjestö

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS**

CE	Customer/consumer engagement
ELUM	Ecological Land-Use Management
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPO	Non-profit organization
PELUM	Participatory Ecological Land-Use Management

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

This bachelor's thesis covers the basic opportunities that the use of social media platforms offers within the European social environment. Facebook and Instagram were chosen as the platforms to be studied due to their popularity in Europe and relative ease to use. The basic terminology regarding the chosen platforms' usage can be found from Appendix 1 at the end of this thesis.

Visibility and differentiation from competition are keys to fundraising in the highly competitive third sector. Social media offers both but mere presence is not enough. The content and the engagement it receives are essential. Therefore, this thesis intends to find out the content and media types that are most engaging in social media. Further, the objective of this thesis is to offer definite, user-friendly instructions for small non-governmental organizations to increase the engagement of their content in Facebook and Instagram. The instructions can be found at the end of this thesis. (See Appendices 3 and 4).

The thesis was commissioned by PELUM Swaziland during the author's professional practical training in Swaziland. The author received valuable information of the organization's structure, its financial and human resources as well as communications' and social media activities through observation while assisting PELUM Swaziland with various office –related tasks. Once the commission had been agreed upon, the topic and research questions were discussed in an in-depth semi-structured interview with PELUM Swaziland's country coordinator Ms. Tsakasile Dlamini. See Appendix 2 for the interview. The topic, the research questions and the objectives of the study were formulated and refined with the information acquired through the observation and, especially, interview. The commissioning organization is introduced next.

## 1.2 PELUM Swaziland

Participatory Ecological Land-Use Management (PELUM) Swaziland is a Christian non-governmental and non-profit organization established in 2014. It is an umbrella organization currently consisting of twelve member organizations. PELUM Swaziland



belongs to the larger PELUM Association which currently contains twelve individual country branches within Africa (PELUM Swaziland, 2017).

Ecological Land-Use Management (ELUM) is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions. In addition, it combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and good stewardship, economic viability and social responsibility (PELUM Swaziland, 2017).

The organization's objective is to enable the small-scale farmers in Swaziland by improving their livelihoods through effective participation in sustainable economic, social, and environmental development (PELUM Swaziland, 2017).

PELUM Swaziland advocates, campaigns and communicates for ELUM -practices both locally and globally to attract financial support to be able to financially support its own and its member organizations' actions (PELUM Swaziland, 2017). This advocacy has been done through both traditional and contemporary media.

Currently, the organization's social media presence is limited to Facebook. PELUM Swaziland has 125 likes on its Facebook page (Facebook, 2017a). The organization does not have a profile on Instagram or in any other social media platform.

### 1.3 Research questions and objectives

Visibility of an NGO is the foundation of influencing consumers' opinions and thoughts to donate for the cause of the organization. Social media is an effective tool for raising visibility but the sheer existence in social media is not adequate. The content and the means of publication of the social media message are crucial to receiving more visibility and recognition. This is ever more so in the highly competitive European context as almost every European nongovernmental organization (NGO) is active in social media. However, it is not clear what kind of content and media types attract the most engagement. With these issues in mind, the thesis has the following research questions:

- What are the fundamental content types of a social media post?
- What are the elemental media types of a social media post?
- What is the level of engagement of the different content and media types?

Following these questions, the aims to achieve three objectives. Firstly, the research focuses on finding out the different types of content and media for a social media message. Secondly, the thesis aims to discover the level of engagement of these content and media types. Thirdly, the thesis provides clear-cut and user-friendly instructions to PELUM Swaziland with regards to creating engaging content to publish within its social media platforms in the future.

#### 1.4 Thesis structure

Upon introduction, chapter two focuses on social media usage and social media platforms both in general as well as more specifically in Europe. Chapter three offers insight to the message in social media introducing the content and media types of a social media post. Finally, the fourth chapter ends the theoretical part of the thesis by covering the concept of engagement in social media.

Chapter five introduces the research design methods applied within this thesis, the data collection process and the results and discussion of the research. Eventually, chapter six concludes the thesis by offering the author's own thoughts on the thesis as well as limitations and further research possibilities. The list of references can be found at the end of the thesis.

Additionally, the thesis consists of four appendices which can be found at the end of this paper. First, Appendix 1 covers the basic social media terminology used within the chosen platforms. Second, Appendix 2 contains the most essential details of the interview with Ms. Tsakasile Dlamini, the country coordinator of PELUM Swaziland. Lastly, Appendices 3 and 4 offer PELUM Swaziland recommendations and instructions regarding the use of the chosen social media platforms according to the results and indications found during the research.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Social media

Social media are global network-based online platforms that enable users to converse, cooperate and share user-generated content, such as ideas, information and pictures with each other. Social media comprises a set of channels that consists of blogs, discussion forums, and social networking sites among others (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). According to Showers (2017), almost three billion people are using social media globally.

For organizations and companies, social media offers a great opportunity to communicate and cooperate, reach a wide audience at a low cost, and receive almost immediate feedback from the target groups (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Wollan, et al., 2011). Due to these opportunities, social media has become highly competitive.

Per Nonprofit Tech For Good (2017), 94% of European NGOs perceived social media as an effective tool for creating brand awareness, and 96% had a Facebook page. Therefore, presence in social media is conceived as self-evident for non-profit organizations to survive within the fiercely competitive field of fundraising. Redsicker (2011), add that the competitors to an organization in social media are not only other similar organizations but every single user as well.

#### 2.1.1 In Europe

According to Kemp (2017), 49% of Europeans use social media actively. In comparison, the global penetration of social media is 37%. Therefore, Europe is one of the more active continents regarding the use of social media. Additionally, the number of social media users in Europe have increased by 20 million (5%) within a year.

The social media penetration percentage is 54% in Western Europe, while Eastern Europe amounts to 44%. Furthermore, Western Europe also has more social media users with 226 million active members compared to the 187 million users in Eastern Europe (Kemp, 2017).

According to Statista (2017), United Kingdom has the highest social media penetration level (64%) from the larger European countries. The Central and Southern European countries had high penetration levels as well led by France, Spain, Italy, and Germany.

However, language needs to be considered while attempting to penetrate the European social media scene. It became obvious while conducting this research that most of the nongovernmental and non-profit organizations from non-English speaking countries operated in own native languages than in English in social media. It affected this thesis by having to resort to mostly United Kingdom –based organizations but it should also be noted by PELUM Swaziland as they operate solely in English as well.

## 2.2 Social media platforms

According to Kallas (2017), Facebook is currently the most popular social media platform globally, followed by YouTube, Instagram and Twitter. In Europe, Facebook dominates the continent by being the leading social media platform on almost every European country. Instagram and Twitter generally battle for being the second most popular platform in the continent but some local social media channels, such as Odnoklassniki and V Kontakte, ranked second in a couple of European countries as well (Vincos, 2017).

According to Stat Counter (2017), Facebook has almost 80% market share of social media users in Europe. Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube follow Facebook as second, third and fourth. Although Instagram ranks only as the fifth popular platform in terms of market share, it has been growing rapidly within the last year going from 0,61% in January 2017 to 1,63% in September 2017. See Figure 1 for the social media market share in Europe.

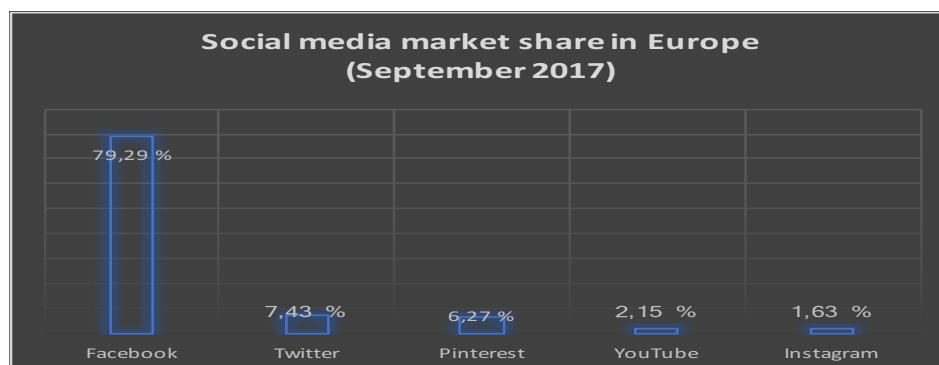


Figure 1. Social media market share in Europe in September 2017 (Stat Counter, 2017).

Adding to the popularity of Facebook and Instagram, Giorgio (2016) found that the two platforms fare extremely well within their multiplatform reach as well as the average time spent on the social media channels. Therefore, it comes as little surprise that Nonprofit Tech for Good (2017) found that Facebook and Instagram alongside with Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn, were the most popular social media platforms among European NGOs.

Based on the pre-research interview, author's own observation as well as the theoretical research conducted, Facebook and Instagram were chosen as the social media channels for this thesis. Firstly, both channels are highly popular with Facebook having the most users globally and Instagram being the fastest growing platform in the world. Secondly, both are relatively easy to use and neither require excessive equipment, such as unlimited internet access or high quality video cameras.

The chosen platforms are introduced more thoroughly in the following chapters.

### 2.2.1 Facebook

Facebook was established in 2004 and has since grown rapidly standing now as the world's leading social media platform in users. The platform currently has around two billion monthly unique visitors (Kallas, 2017; Zantal-Wiener, 2017), and it is also the most popular platform among the marketers worldwide (Stelzner, 2017).

To use the platform, users initially create their own profiles. The profile consists of general and personal information of the member, such as the date of birth, relationship status and educational background. However, the member can choose not to share this information publicly or not to answer those inquiries at all (Facebook, 2017b).

After registration, the members can, for instance, post comments, images and videos, and create events and groups. Additionally, connecting with friends, public personalities as well as companies and organizations is a key element of the social aspect of all social media platforms and Facebook as well. Once the users are connected with the people and entities they desire, the platform allows them to receive the content posted by these individuals and organizations on their news feeds (Nations, 2017).

Furthermore, companies and organizations can create their own company pages allowing them to promote their products, services, and brands to the individual members

and other entities on Facebook. Moreover, other members can *like* (see Appendix 1) the company's page enabling the organization to communicate with those individuals and vice versa. This interactivity allows the organizations to increase their visibility and engagement with their customers. Additionally, the companies can promote and inform their followers of their brand, products and activities (Reitz, 2012).

According to Kemp (2017), most of the users in Facebook fall within the 18-45 –year-olds. Zantal-Wiener (2017), points out that Facebook is generally thought to be the platform with the widest audience age- and gender-wise.

Facebook performs well in Europe as well and has a dominating leadership in the continent's social media market share (Stat Counter, 2017). Giorgio (2016) adds that Facebook is not only the top performer in the sheer volume of users but its members' average time per visit is by far the highest in Europe. Country-wise, United Kingdom leads all European countries with approximately 44 million Facebook users. France, Germany, and Italy follow with slightly above 30 million users (Internet World Stats, 2017).

Facebook is highly popular among European nongovernmental organizations as well. 96% of the continent's NGOs have a Facebook page. Additionally, the platform is the most favoured means for live reporting among the NGOs (Nonprofit Tech for Good, 2017). With all this data in mind, it seems self-evident that every non-governmental organization aiming to survive in the European context must have a Facebook page.

PELUM Swaziland already has a Facebook page. However, the page has not been able to attract major popularity as it currently has 125 likes (Facebook, 2017a).

### 2.2.2 Instagram

Founded in 2010, Instagram is the fastest growing social media platform in the world (Showers, 2017). Bought by Facebook in 2012 (Upbin, 2012), it currently has around 800 million monthly active users (Instagram, 2017a). The platform's users are predominantly female and young with most users under the age of 35 (Parker, 2016; York, 2017).

Instagram is a social media application created for sharing photographs and videos. Additionally, the content can only be published via smartphones which is another

difference to Facebook. However, the platforms share similarities as well. Once a member has created an Instagram account, the user has a news feed and the possibility to follow other users. Upon following, the follower's news feed shows the photos and videos published by the members followed (Moreau, 2017).

In Europe, the leading country in Instagram users is United Kingdom with around 17 million users (Napoleon Cat, 2017a). Following UK are Italy, Germany, and Spain, respectively (Napoleon Cat, 2017b; Napoleon Cat, 2017c; Napoleon Cat, 2017d). Furthermore, as is the case in the rest of world, Instagram is growing swiftly in Europe as well (McNair, 2017).

According to Non-profit Tech for Good (2017), 39% of nongovernmental organizations both globally and in Europe have a profile on Instagram. Although the number is much lower than Facebook's number, it has risen nine per cent within a year (Nonprofit Tech for Good, 2016).

Additionally, given that Instagram's popularity has been growing tremendously during the past few years in general, NGOs will probably begin increasingly utilize the platform in the future as well. Accordingly, the application has already become favourable for marketers as over 60 per cent of marketers are planning on increasing their activities on Instagram in the future (Stelzner, 2017).

Currently, PELUM Swaziland does not have an Instagram account. However, given the rapid growth of the platform, they should seriously consider adopting the platform in the future.

### 2.3 Social media post characteristics

The arrival of social media presented various new characteristics to the message compared to message in traditional media. Social media is open, transparent and highly interactive while traditional media is often the exact opposite. The users are the active parties who are involved in the whole process often deciding whether an organization's social media marketing campaign is successful or not (Hausman, 2012).

Hausman (2012) points out that while traditional media, such as television and radio, remain free of charge for the users in exchange for disruptive commercials, social media platforms are originally free of charge. Therefore, the message within social media

should not be disruptive. Instead, the content should provide value for the consumers in social media.

In the wake of social media, marketing specialists used to consider the number of followers as a signal of strong social media status leading up to high level of engagement. However, majority of these connections never engaged with the brands through liking, sharing or commenting. Once this was noticed, the focus shifted from simply attracting followers towards designing useful and relevant content i.e. content engineering (or content marketing) (Pulizzi, 2012; Lee, et al., 2017).

The characteristics of social media posts have been studied relatively little. De Vries et al. (2012) offered a conceptual framework for the popularity of a brand post which was later slightly refined by Tafesse (2014). The figure has proved out to be fundamental since it has been applied in most of the studies within the field of social media post characteristics. The refined version of the brand post characteristics is presented in Figure 2.

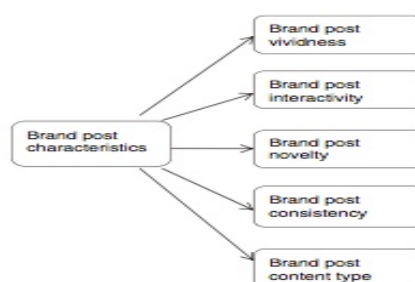


Figure 2. Brand post characteristics (Tafesse, 2014).

Despite all characteristics possess intriguing research perspectives, the focus on this thesis falls within the content and media types of a brand post. De Vries et al. (2012) and Tafesse (2014) study media types under the brand post vividness. Vividness deals with the brand post's ability to stimulate the viewers' senses. In other words, a post is vivid in case it stimulates several senses of a customer. Vividness itself does not only deal with the media types but also with, for instance, the use of colours in the text or pictures. Within this thesis, however, only the media types and their engagement are analysed and, hence, the vividness of a brand post is not examined.

The content and media types of a brand post are focused in the following chapters.



### 2.3.1 Content types

Studies regarding the characteristics of a brand post have applied slightly varying categorization for the content types of the post. De Vries et al. (2012), divided the brand post content into information and entertainment content in their research on global brands' Facebook messages. Saxena & Khanna (2013), studied advertising on social networking sites and applied informative and entertainment content as the types as well. However, they additionally examined the effects of irritation content in their research. Irritation deals with annoyance and displeasure that the content arouses in the viewers and is often considered foolish, fake and unsuccessful on behalf of the consumers.

Tafesse (2014), also applied informational and entertaining content types in his study but added a profit –related transactional content type into the mix. Shen & Bissell (2013) and Swani et al. (2014), however, took totally different views in their respective studies. Both dealt more closely with corporations and for-profit organizations which affected their classifications and included more categories related to promotions and prices of corporations.

This thesis applies the informational and entertaining content types within its research. The other types do not seem applicable with the study as the types related to transactional, promotional and price-related elements are more recognizable in brand posts from for-profit organizations. NGOs typically do not sell a distinct product or service but have a cause for raising funds instead. In addition, unlike for-profit companies, NGOs do not usually offer bonus programs or promotions for their causes. Therefore, categories related to promotion and prices are not as relevant for non-profit as to for-profit organizations. Additionally, the irritation category applied by Saxena & Khanna (2013) was left out as well because the thesis does not focus on the content that is not engaging.

The informational and entertaining content types are focused more specifically next.

#### **Informational content**

According to Saxena & Khanna (2013), informative content offers the consumers useful information about the product, service or brand. It highlights, for instance, the qualities and performance of the product or showcases the efforts being done. Information is one

of the main motivators behind the usage of social media as well. Informational content in social media is highly coveted especially in brand-related issues as consumers look for opinions and advices online (Muntinga, et al., 2011).

The idea of informational content is to portray the product as meeting or even exceeding the consumer's expectations and fulfilling the needs of the customer. However, Saxena & Khanna (2013) point out that the objective of informative content is not to exaggerate the qualities but to offer the customer valid proofs for evaluation. In the age of interactivity honesty is increasingly important as excessive claims are quickly shut down by the social media users (Cox, 2016). Therefore, the informative content usually underlines the *rational* aspects of the product or the work being done.

Bryan (2014) adds that informative content should offer new knowledge or respond to questions that the consumers have about the organization or a cause in the case of nongovernmental organizations. It is worth noticing, however, that only creating informative content does not necessarily provide engagement in return. Bryan (2014) reminds that the content must be interesting and relevant to the consumers as well.

The informative content within this topic consisted of information regarding the NGOs and their work. The research within this thesis found, for instance, posts about the accomplishments of the NGOs within their humanitarian efforts as well educating the followers about the situations in the targeted communities. Picture 1 below presents an example of informative content found during the research.



Picture 1. An example of informative content (Facebook, 2017b).

## Entertaining content

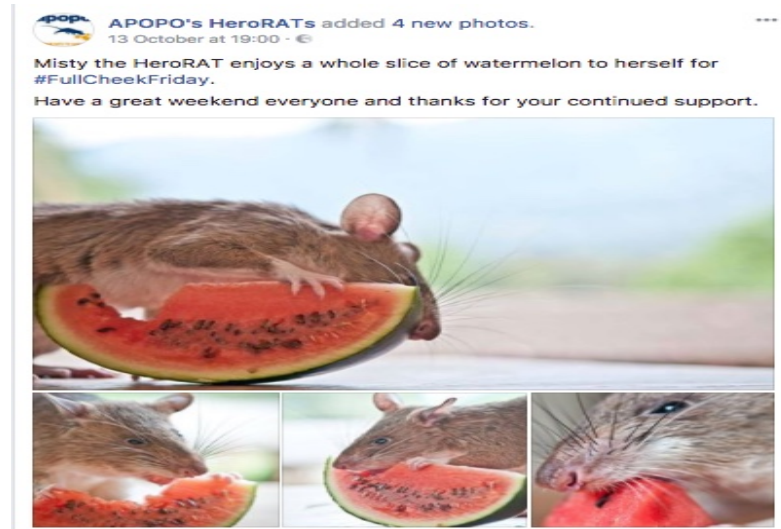
Kotler & Armstrong (2014) define entertaining content as content that generates either positive or negative feelings in the consumers. De Vries et al. (2012) remark that entertaining content is often unrelated to the brand itself. Additionally, Saxena & Khanna (2013) concluded that entertaining and information are complementary as entertaining content is often considered informative as well.

Muntinga et al. (2011), state that entertaining content typically offers the consumer leisure, pleasure and is considered as pastime as well. It often results in consumer spending more time with the advertising brand's content. Furthermore, de Vries et al. (2012) declared that consumer's attitude towards a brand is generally considered to improve through entertaining content.

Kotler & Armstrong (2014) note that entertaining content often takes advantage of humour. However, they remind that carefulness must be adhered to as humour can backfire and end up hurting the brand as well. Hollensen (2017), adds that carefulness is required especially when operating in the international field since the sense of humour differs a lot within the global spectrum.

The research by de Vries et al. (2012) considered brand post content as entertaining in case it consisted of content unrelated to the brand. Saxena & Khanna (2013), on the other hand, did not offer a specific definition for the entertaining content but described the effects of it more thoroughly.

The entertaining content within this research covers the posts stirring up emotional responses in the readers. The content often does not focus on the NGO or its work. However, unlike de Vries et al. (2012), the thesis acknowledges that posts related to the organization can be entertaining in content as well.



Picture 2. An example of entertaining content (Facebook, 2017b).

### 2.3.2 Media types

Several researches have studied or at least included social media posts' media types within the scope of their research with slightly different categories. Brookes (2010) considered text, pictures and videos as the media types within her study on the performance of randomly selected brands' Facebook messages.

De Vries et al. (2012) studied the brand post characteristics and their relationships to engagement within their research. The study recognized pictures, videos and events as the media types with events being similar to text or status updates in other academic work. Concurrently with de Vries et al. (ibid), Leung (2012) undertook a similar research on the hotel industry's Facebook posts. On the contrary to de Vries et al. (2012), she considered plain text, pictures, videos and links as the media types for a brand post on Facebook.

Additional studies regarding the media types specifically or incorporating them into a wider body of research have been conducted more recently. Sabate et al. (2014), studied the factors affecting brands' content on Facebook fan pages and considered links, pictures and videos as the media types of a social media post. Kim et al. (2015), followed on the footsteps of Brookes (2010) in their analysis of international brands' content and media types by considering text, pictures and videos as the types of media. Jayasingh & Venkatesh (2015) as well as Luarn et al. (2015) categorized the media types into status

update, images, videos and links. Jayasingh & Venkatesh (2015) added offers as the fifth media types due to the nature of their research.

The usage of the media types has not been the main objective of the afore-mentioned studies. However, Leung (2012) reported that of the posts she studied close to 38% were links, 30,5% images, almost 29% plain text, and only 2,9% were videos. Divergently, Jayasingh & Venkatesh (2015) found that pictures were the most used within their study followed by links and videos, while status updates were the least favoured media type. Additionally, in the study by Kim et al. (2015), pictures were by far the most utilized type by covering nearly 74% of the posts. Videos came in second with 11,7%, while posts with only text were used the least with 11,4%. The study did not include links within the media types.

The media types studied on this research are text-only, links, pictures and videos. These were the most commonly used types in the afore-mentioned previous researches. The term for text-only media type altered between studies being coined as a status update, plain text or only text. Within this thesis text-only was chosen as the term because it was the most distinguishable. In order to be categorized to text-only type, the post cannot contain anything else but text. Therefore, posts classified as links, pictures or videos can contain a short introductory text as well. The focus on those posts is, however, on the link, picture or video content.

## 2.4 Social media engagement

Despite being considered the most important objective of brands' presence in social media (Evans & McKee, 2010; Brodie, et al., 2013) and regardless of the considerable academic interest and numerous attempts at finding the all-encompassing definition of the term, a thorough explanation and definition of the concept of customer engagement (CE) has not been reached (Dessart, et al., 2015).

Vivek et al. (2012) consider consumer engagement as the fundamental concept within the marketing system. York (2017) describes engagement as a long-lasting relationship that should be the objective of all interactions within social media. Sedley (2008), considered that consumer engagement results to competitive benefits for the organization and is useful in predicting the performance of the business in the future. Jackson (2017) states that consumer's engagement towards a brand or organization

implies commitment and trust on the customer's behalf increasing brand awareness and sales in the process. Accordingly, Osei-Frimpong & Mclean (2017) found that customers are more likely to use brands they are connected to in social media.

Some researchers like Bowden (2009) and Brodie et al. (2011), take a more psychological approach to engagement despite the studies' minor differences in descriptions. The studies consider customer engagement as being established through experiences that mould the mind of the consumer towards a more positive opinion of the brand or organization in question. On the contrary, Van Doorn et al. (2010), consider engagement to be a more behavioural approach developing out of motivational reasons. In other words, customers are engaged by the possible benefits, such as status increase or promotions, that the brand, product or service can offer them.

DeMers (2017) offers perhaps the most perceivable, but admittedly very simplistic, description of engagement by stating that it is *"the ability to connect with your followers"*. On the contrary, Hollebeek (2011, p. 565) offers a more thorough albeit a more complex definition as well by stating that customer engagement is *"the level of perceived cognitive, emotional and behavioural investment in, and ensuing perceived returns extracted from, a customer's interactive brand experience."*

#### 2.4.1 Importance of engagement

Luarn et al. (2015), point that engagement increases the reach and visibility of an organization in the online environment because the followers' actions, such as liking and sharing, spread the organization's content throughout the social media. Therefore, the more engaging the content on social media is, the more visible the organization will be (Ruiz-Mafe, et al., 2014).

According to Brodie et al. (2011), engagement increases the consumers' valuation of the brand. Additionally, engaging content creates loyalty among the customers which is crucial for the organization's aim of retaining its customers (Casaló Ariño, et al., 2010). Roberts & Alpert (2010) even go as far as to state that consumer engagement is the highest form of consumer loyalty towards a company or organization. Moreover, a study by Dawes (2009) discovered that consumer loyalty is clearly linked with the profitability of a business as well as the consumer's indifference on the prices of products and services.

Overall, customer engagement is considered to bring in results that are desired by all businesses. In addition to the loyalty, CE adds sales, profits and creates free consumer-driven word-of-mouth advertising (Solomon, 2015). All these traits highlight the importance of engagement for businesses in general, and ever more so for nongovernmental and non-profit organizations as their ability to generate income through donations mainly relies on their capability to be visible (Zainon, et al., 2011). Therefore, generating engagement is crucial for the NGOs as a way of creating visibility.

#### 2.4.2 Creation of engagement

Despite various studies regarding engaging content and brand post characteristics, the traits generating engagement in social media have been studied relatively little in the academic world.

Bowden (2009) studied the consumer engagement processes and introduced a conceptual framework for the process. The framework suggests that the creation of loyalty towards a brand requires various psychological phases. Moreover, the phases are slightly different for the first-time and repeat consumers. New consumers are considered to install a higher emphasis on the calculative commitment when evaluating the service. They consider the rational aspects of the brand, such as the cost of products, and its capability to fulfil their utilitarian requirements. Returning customers, on the contrary, tend to place higher importance on their involvement with the brand which increases the level of trust. The higher the level of trust is, the greater the commitment of the consumer towards the brand is. See Figure 3 for the framework.

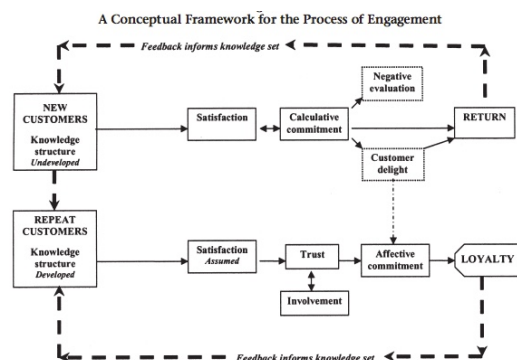


Figure 3. A conceptual framework for the process of engagement (Bowden, 2009).

Additionally, Sashi (2012) studied social media, consumer engagement and the relationship between customers and sellers, developing the customer engagement cycle as a result. The process begins with the connection between the retailer and consumer. After the connection, the seller and customer interact with each other, for example, by meeting at the store, advertisements or communicating in social media. Generally, social media has increased the possibility of interaction considerably. Successful interaction causes satisfaction on the consumer's side which may eventually lead to customer retention. Consumer's commitment towards the brand or product follows once the customer stays loyal and is highly satisfied of the overall offering in the long run. Being emotionally and rationally committed to the brand leads consumers to praise the product and advocate it for others, for instance family members and friends. Consumer's long-term satisfaction of the brand and positive emotional relationship with the retailer turns the consumer into enduring supporter of the brand, and results to customer engagement. Customers should be considered as part of the value creation of the brand at this stage as well. See Figure 4 for the customer engagement cycle.

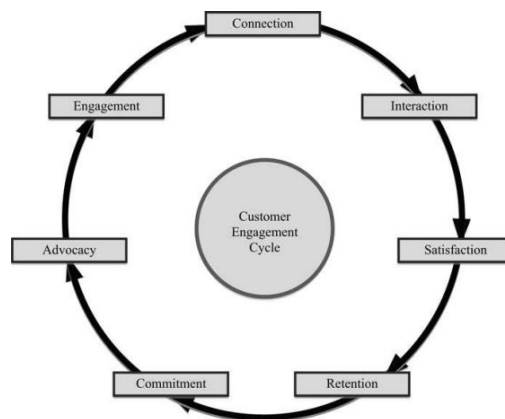


Figure 4. Customer Engagement Cycle (Sashi, 2012).

Additionally, Hirsch (2016) disclosed four distinct characteristics on the creation of social media engagement. First, *continuous beta* relates to incorporating the users into the development of the product or service as well. This takes place by allowing consumers to update the products with enhancements that they consider valuable. For example, Uber, the international transportation technology company, allows its consumers to customize their experiences by playing the music they desire by collaborating with Spotify (Uber, 2016).



Second, *co-ownership* is associated with user-generated content (UGC). As social media platforms are highly interactive, posting user-generated brand-related content within the brand's social media platforms creates a lot of engagement. Evans & McKee (2010) underline participation as well as and encourage companies to create interactive and collaborative content as much as possible. For instance, the coffee chain company Starbucks asked its social media followers to decorate their Starbucks coffee cups and post the results to social media (Starbucks, 2014). The campaign received over 4000 entries within the first three weeks and the eventual winner could start her own business as a result of the popularity (Starbucks, 2015). The whole process created a considerable amount of positive publicity and engagement for the company.

Third, social media has *room for error*. Various unsuccessful or even harmful posts and campaigns have been published by brands in the past. For example, even though Starbucks' race –related campaign had good intentions, the result was a disaster. Numerous people voiced their displeasure and noted that despite the talks of equality, wide majority of the leadership of the company were white but almost half of the low-paid baristas were people of colour. The critique forced the coffee chain to pull back and end the campaign quickly (The Economist, 2015). However, Hirsch (2016), points that even negative emotions create engagement as creating controversial material still brings in publicity.

Last, *convenor-ship* deals with the brand's ability to bring up conversation on challenging issues and allowing people to discuss it on the brand's social media pages. For instance, Under Armor, the shoe and clothing manufacturer, gathered significant publicity and discussion via their campaign related to gender equality (Nudd, 2015). The campaign is a prime example of being able to stir up meaningful discussion on the company's social media pages.

Next, the thesis shifts its focus from the creation of engagement into the means of measuring it in social media.

#### 2.4.3 Measuring engagement

The engagement of social media posts has been studied increasingly during the last few years. The consensus within the academic world has been that the likes, shares and comments of a social media posts reflect the engagement of the post (Leung, 2012;

Luarn, et al., 2015; Zudrell, 2016). Jayasingh & Venkatesh (2015) agree with the three components as well, adding that according to their studies comments are the most engaging of the three.

However, de Vries et al. (2012) and Sabate et al. (2014) measured the engagement by only counting the number of likes and comments, leaving the number of shares out of the equation, despite the latter mentioning shares as part of creating the total engagement. Neither gave a specific reason as to why shares were left out of their studies.

Instead of shares, Olczak & Sobczyk (2013) left the number of comments out, counting only the number of likes and shares within their study. They argued that while comments are part of the engagement of a post, the fact that one user can type in as many comments as one pleases might disturb the total level of engagement. The argument makes sense on a theoretical level, at least, as a user can register only one like and one share but a myriad of comments. However, the worst-case scenario does not seem to happen often in reality as trolling comments did not occur during the research of this thesis, at least.

Despite these three studies applying only two of the three common metrics for measuring the engagement of a social media post, this thesis assesses the engagement by using the combination of likes, shares and comments, treating each element equally important.

#### 2.4.4 Engagement and content types

Saxena & Khanna (2013) found that advertisements containing either informative or entertaining content have a considerable positive influence on the value of the advertisement presented on the social media channels.

Furthermore, the study concluded that informative content adds more value than entertaining content, which was supported also by de Vries et al. (2012). Conversely, a study by Shen & Bissell (2013) concluded that entertaining adverts are more influencing than advertisements containing informative content. A study by Tafesse (2014), came to a similar view that entertaining content returned slightly more likes than informative content.

In support of the above-mentioned two studies, Blasco-Arcas et al. (2016) found that personalized content that establishes customer-to-customer interactions creates intimacy and transparency, both of which have a beneficial impact on the customer engagement. Additionally, Gummerus et al. (2012) found that entertaining content, such as humorous pictures or other emotional content, was highly engaging on a Facebook community.

Lastly, Du Plessis (2017) suggested that the technical and demographical differences between social media platforms should be considered when designing the content as custom made messages for specific platforms were found to be more engaging than identical publications on all platforms.

#### 2.4.5 Engagement and media types

Consensus has not been reached within the academic world on the most engaging media type in social media. However, the least engaging media type across the board has been the text-only type.

Brookes (2010) found in her study that images are the most engaging media type. Images were over 22% more engaging than videos and as much as 54% more engaging compared to text. Additionally, videos returned 27% higher level on engagement than text. Contrarily, de Vries et al. (2012) found that videos triumph over pictures in the level of engagement. This finding was supported by both Tafesse (2014) and Jayasingh & Venkatesh (2015).

However, several other studies support Brookes' (2010) results (Leung, 2012; Sabate, et al., 2014; Kim, et al., 2015; Luarn, et al., 2015). The studies stated two common reasons as to why pictures are more engaging than videos. First, the creation of high quality video content is more challenging than the creation of high quality photographs. Second, videos require consumers to spend much more time on the content, while pictures are quickly consumed.

The engagement of links has not been extensively studied. Nonetheless, links have been included within the media types in various studies which offer minor pieces of information regarding the status of links' engagement. Leung (2012) found in his study that links and videos had more shares than other media types (pictures, text). Sabate et al. (2014) conducted that links affect the number of comment adversely. Last, Jayasingh &

Venkatesh (2015) found links to be second least engaging media type beating only text-only.

## 3 RESEARCH

### 3.1 Research design

According to Saunders et al. (2016), a research can consist of three different research designs. First, quantitative research design investigates relations between variables. These variables are assessed numerically and evaluated by various analytical and graphical techniques. The quantitative research is often done by using questionnaires, surveys or a structured observation (Saunders, et al., 2016).

Second, Saunders et al. (2016) state that qualitative research design aims at reaching a comprehensive knowledge of the participants' actions, behaviour, and manners as well as the relationships between them. Qualitative research is often conducted through in-depth interviews, although other means exist as well.

Third and last, mixed methods research design is a research that applies both quantitative and qualitative research designs within its data collection. There are several variations of the title of the mixed methods design regarding the chronological order that the quantitative and qualitative design are applied (Saunders, et al., 2016).

This thesis applied the quantitative research design as its method for data collection. The pre-research observation and interview were not considered as methods for data collection because those qualitative procedures did not assist in finding the answers for the research questions. Instead, the means only supported the development and formulation of the research topic and questions. Therefore, the quantitative research design was chosen as the data collection method to solve the research questions of this thesis. The primary data of the thesis is focused on in the following section.

### 3.2 Primary data

Primary data is information gathered particularly for the specific study at hand (Hox & Boeije, 2005; Saunders, et al., 2016). The primary data applied within this thesis is comparison.

Comparison was chosen as the most appropriate and suitable way of finding out the desired answers for the research questions. Additionally, comparison or benchmarking

were applied within several of the previous studies on the field (de Vries, et al., 2012; Leung, 2012; Tafesse, 2014; Jayasingh & Venkatesh, 2015; Kim, et al., 2015; Luarn, et al., 2015).

The difference between comparison and benchmarking is not major. Camp (1989) describes benchmarking as looking for the field's leading procedures and putting them into practice resulting to superior performance for the implementing organization. Similarly, Brueck et al. (2003), Tuominen et al. (2005), and Raghupathi (2017) define benchmarking as the recognition and comprehension of the leading practices of any industry and beginning to use them in order to reach exceptional results.

Raghupathi (2017), further emphasise that benchmarking in social media allows the organization to find out whether and how well their message is engaging with their customers and other stakeholders, and what possible improvements can be done to increase the level of engagement.

However, due to the novice status of PELUM Swaziland in social media, benchmarking it to the leading nongovernmental and non-profit organizations was not considered beneficial. First, PELUM Swaziland barely has any social media presence to be analysed and compared. Second, PELUM Swaziland does not possess the capacity and manpower that the industry's leading large-scale organizations have. Therefore, both the industry's leading organizations and PELUM Swaziland were excluded from the process. Instead, European organizations similar to PELUM Swaziland's future capability were included to the comparison. The comparison of these organizations was considered to offer important, relatable and relevant information for PELUM Swaziland.

Due to this confining, the data collection method could not be labelled as benchmarking. As mentioned above, benchmarking compares the actions of the field's *leading* organizations. As those organizations were purposely left out, the data collection method is referred to as comparison.

The data collection by means of comparison is dealt within the next chapter.

### 3.3 Data collection by comparison

The research consists of ten different European non-governmental organizations operating in various sectors of the humanitarian aid. The organizations were chosen by

their social media presence with the aim of finding NGOs with prominent social media status. As mentioned earlier, the largest organizations, such as Amnesty International and the Red Cross, were left out because the author wanted to remain realistic with PELUM Swaziland's future possibilities.

Therefore, the target organizations for the benchmarking were chosen to be the organizations with a medium-sized social media status. According to a recent research (Nonprofit Tech for Good, 2017), European medium-sized nongovernmental organizations have around 60,000 likes on Facebook and 2,000 followers on Instagram on average. Thus, the objective was to find European NGOs relatively close to these perimeters because the social media traffic of medium-sized NGOs was thought to be significant enough to produce reliable and notable results.

It is worth noticing that majority of the compared organizations came from United Kingdom due to linguistic reasons. Many of the organizations operating in Central or Southern Europe tend to communicate with their native languages. Thus, including those organizations into the comparison was not possible due to the author's inability to comprehend the languages and, hence, the messages they had published. Those regions should not be ruled out by PELUM Swaziland but the possible language barriers should be considered carefully before entering the markets.

The following Table 1 presents the compared organizations in alphabetical order. Additionally, the organizations' number of social media followers in Facebook (likes) and Instagram are listed. The data for the followers was obtained between the 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> of October 2017.

Table 1. General information of the benchmarked nongovernmental organizations.

Organization	Origin	Facebook	Instagram
<i>APOPO HeroRATs</i>	Belgium (APOPO, 2017)	<b>64330</b> (Facebook, 2017c)	<b>15193</b> (Instagram, 2017b)
<i>Concern Worldwide</i>	Ireland (Concern Worldwide, 2017)	<b>56165</b> (Facebook, 2017d)	<b>2895</b> (Instagram, 2017c)
<i>Kiron Open Higher Education</i>	Germany (Kiron, 2017)	<b>24435</b> (Facebook, 2017e)	<b>762</b> (Instagram, 2017d)
<i>Mary's Meals</i>	Scotland (Mary's Meals, 2017)	<b>43233</b> (Facebook, 2017f)	<b>3720</b> (Instagram, 2017e)
<i>Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)</i>	Norway (NRC, 2017)	<b>52741</b> (Facebook, 2017g)	<b>9109</b> (Instagram, 2017f)
<i>PLAN International</i>	UK (PLAN International UK, 2017)	<b>58017</b> (Facebook, 2017h)	<b>7131</b> (Instagram, 2017g)
<i>Teach For All</i>	UK/Global (Teach For All, 2017)	<b>45914</b> (Facebook, 2017i)	<b>8844</b> (Instagram, 2017h)
<i>Tearfund</i>	UK (Tearfund, 2017)	<b>48497</b> (Facebook, 2017j)	<b>6813</b> (Instagram, 2017i)
<i>Trocaire</i>	Ireland (Trocaire, 2017)	<b>27999</b> (Facebook, 2017k)	<b>1043</b> (Instagram, 2017j)
<i>War Child</i>	UK (War Child, 2017)	<b>52321</b> (Facebook, 2017l)	<b>4730</b> (Instagram, 2017k)

The organizations' social media statuses were compared for the three-week period between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 2017. The comparison itself was done on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of October. First, the organizations' number of posts were counted and divided to describe the weekly average of posts. Second, the engagement of the posts was registered and the engagement per post calculated. As mentioned previously, the number of likes, shares and comments formed the total engagement of a post. Third, content elements and the media types of the posts were measured and, fourthly, the engagement of both brand post characteristics was registered and divided to represent the engagement per post. Additionally, the ratios between different content elements and



media types were determined. The following chapter presents the results of the research performed.

### 3.4 Results

Overall, 347 messages were published on both platforms together by the ten non-governmental organization within the three-week period. 63,7% of the messages were published on Facebook, leaving Instagram a share of 36,3%. As expected, the number of publications per week was higher on Facebook as well. The organizations typically posted a tad over seven times a week on Facebook but only around four posts per week on Instagram. However, despite the fewer number of posts the engagement per post was significantly higher on Instagram. The engagement (likes, shares and comments) per post on Instagram was 198, while Facebook reached to 138.

Table 2 presents the fundamental information on the messages published during the chosen period of time as well as the engagement those messages garnered.

Table 2. The distribution of messages and engagement on the chosen platforms.

Platform	Total posts	Posts per week	% of total posts	Total engagement	Engagement per post
Facebook	221	7,4	63,7%	30525	138,1
Instagram	126	4,2	36,3%	24947	198,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>11,6</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>55472</b>	<b>159,9</b>

### 3.4.1 Content types

#### Both platforms

Entertaining content type was more popular surmounting to 57,9% of the posts on both platforms. Additionally, the engagement level per post was considerably higher for the posts containing entertainment.

The difference between the two content types was even more significant after counting the amount of total engagement per type. The entertaining content type accounted for 71,6% of the total engagement on both platforms, while the informative only gathered 28,4%. This is significant because the difference between the two types on the amount of posts was 15,8% but is 43,2% on the total amount of engagement. This further supports the notion that entertaining content reaches noticeably higher levels of engagement compared to informative content.

Table 3 offers the details of the content types and engagement on both platforms combined.

Table 3. The distribution of content types on the messages of both platforms.

Type	Posts	% of total posts	Engagement	Engagement per post	% of total engagement
Informative	146	42,1%	15756	107,9	28,4%
Entertaining	201	57,9%	39716	197,6	71,6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>55472</b>	<b>159,9</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Facebook

Considering Facebook, posts containing entertaining content were more popular as well accounting for 56,1% of the total posts on the platform. Additionally, the same trend was even stronger on the amount of engagement of the content types.

First, the engagement per entertaining post was almost double the engagement that the posts containing informative content received. Second, 69,5% of all engagement was gathered by messages with entertaining content. Although majority of the posts were entertaining in nature, the distribution of engagement is leaning even more towards the entertaining content in engagement than in posts.

Table 4 contains the information regarding content types and engagement on Facebook messages.

Table 4. The distribution of content types on Facebook messages.

Type	Posts	% of total posts	Engagement	Engagement per post	% of total engagement
Informative	97	43,9%	9324	96,1	30,5%
Entertaining	124	56,1%	21201	171,0	69,5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>30525</b>	<b>138,1</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Instagram

The division of content elements between posts and engagement on Instagram is similar but even more substantial compared to Facebook. Entertaining content amounted to 61,1% of the total messages and 74,2% of the total engagement. While the engagement per informative post was around 131, entertaining content recorded an average engagement level of over 240.

According to these results, entertaining content is clearly more engaging than messages containing informative content on both platforms. Table 5 provides insights to the aforementioned statistics.

Table 5. The distribution of content types on Instagram messages.

Element	Posts	% of total posts	Engagement	Engagement per post	% of total engagement
Informative	49	38,9%	6432	131,3	25,8%
Entertaining	77	61,1%	18515	240,5	74,2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>24947</b>	<b>203,4</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

### 3.4.2 Media types

Because the compared media types of the platforms varied with Facebook having four (text-only, links, picture and videos) and Instagram only two (pictures and videos), there was no point in combining the platforms' results together. Therefore, the platforms are only dealt separately within this category.

#### Facebook

Pictures were the most favoured media type on Facebook as over half of the content published consisted of pictures. Additionally, links were the second most applied media type with 32,1%, followed by videos with 16,8%. Slightly surprisingly, no posts containing only text were registered during the research.

The distribution of engagement provided different and interesting results compared to the distribution of posts. Despite amounting to only 16,8% of the posts, videos had the highest engagement per post. Pictures' popularity per post was slightly less than videos'. However, the engagement per post for links was extremely low by registering only half of the engagement that a post containing a video registered. Moreover, while accounting to 32,1% of the total posts, links had only 20,4% of the total engagement of the posts on Facebook.

Table 6 below offers further information about the media types of the posts and their engagement.

Table 6. The distribution of media types and engagement of the Facebook messages.

Type	Posts	% of total posts	Engagement	Engagement per post	% of total engagement
Text-only	0	0	0	0	0
Pictures	113	51,1%	17866	158,1	58,5%
Videos	37	16,8%	6436	173,9	21,1%
Links	71	32,1%	6223	87,6	20,4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>30525</b>	<b>138,1</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

## Instagram

Pictures comprised the overwhelming majority of the publications' content types as 88,1% of the posts were pictures. However, the engagement rate of videos was tremendously higher than the engagement of pictures. Although representing only 11,9%% of the total messages, videos amounted to 28,9% of the total engagement of the posts on Instagram.

Additionally, the engagement per post for videos was over three times greater than that of pictures. See Table 7 for more details on the engagement of media types on Instagram.

Table 7. The distribution of content type and engagement of the Instagram messages.

Type	Posts	% of total posts	Engagement	Engagement per post	% of total engagement
Pictures	111	88,1%	17728	159,7	71,1%
Videos	15	11,9%	7219	481,3	28,9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>24947</b>	<b>203,4</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

### 3.5 Analysis

According to the research of this thesis, a medium-sized nongovernmental organization posts daily on Facebook and four times per week on Instagram.

The results on both platforms clearly indicate that entertaining content is more engaging than informative. The findings are similar to the studies by Shen & Bissell (2013) and Tafesse (2014). Additionally, both Gummerus et al. (2012) and Blasco-Arcas et al. (2016) stated that entertaining content is highly engaging which is supported by the results of this thesis.

Conversely, the findings of de Vries et al. (2012) and Saxena & Khanna (2013) contradict the findings of the research in question as the two studies concluded that informative content gathers more engagement than entertaining content.

According to the research in question as well as all the previous studies, organizations should prefer videos and pictures to links and text as the media types of the post. Both Brookes (2010) and Jayasingh & Venkatesh (2015) discovered that text was the least engaging media type among the types. This information seems to have been understood and adopted by the compared nongovernmental organizations as no posts containing of only text were found during the research.

The results point out that links were rather often applied on Facebook. However, as noted by earlier studies (Sabate, et al., 2014; Jayasingh & Venkatesh, 2015), links are much

less engaging than pictures and videos. Therefore, links should not be applied as often as the previous two.

The results of the thesis suggest that videos are the most engaging media type, followed by pictures. These two types were the most engaging in all the previous studies as well. However, the order differs between studies. De Vries et al. (2012), Tafesse (2014) and Jayasingh & Venkatesh (2015) support the findings of this thesis by discovering that videos were more engaging than pictures. Simultaneously, Brookes (2010), Leung (2012), Sabate et al. (2014), Kim et al. (2015) and Luarn et al. (2015) discovered pictures as more engaging than videos.

However, within the research the difference of the engagement between videos and pictures on Facebook was much less significant than on Instagram. It is worth noticing that videos on Facebook were much more often applied than on Instagram. Therefore, the low number of videos on Instagram might have led to a slight distortion of the results, thus decreasing the credibility of the results of this thesis a notch. Nonetheless, videos seem to be more popular on both platforms.

To summarize, the results indicate that the weekly publications of an organization should consist of seven posts on Facebook and four on Instagram. Approximately two thirds of the content should be entertaining, while one third should be allocated to informative content. Videos and pictures should be preferred as the media types, while links and text should be used much more rarely.

## 4 CONCLUSION

### 4.1 Outcomes

The thesis intended and succeeded to answer the three research questions it had. First, the objective was to find the fundamental content types of a social media post. After an in-depth literature review, informative and entertaining content types were defined as the types. The literature offered other possible content types as well but those were eliminated due to their for-profit nature. Second, the purpose was to determine the elementary media types of a social media post. By studying the previous academic works the media types were determined as text-only, links, pictures, and videos. However, the chosen platforms of this study differ in the number of media types. Facebook possesses all four media types but Instagram only has pictures and videos.

Thirdly, the thesis aimed at discovering the level of engagement of the different content and media types. The research found that entertaining content was considerably more engaging than informative content on Facebook and Instagram. Videos were the most engaging media types on Facebook, followed closely by pictures. Despite their frequent use, links has a low level of engagement. Interestingly, text-only posts were not registered during the research. Previous studies had found that text-only media type is the least engaging and, therefore, it can be speculated that the compared NGOs of this study had acknowledged it. Videos were three times more engaging than pictures on Instagram. However, the low number of videos recorded in the research may distort the results a little. Nonetheless, it is safe to conclude that videos are significantly more engaging than pictures on Instagram.

The thesis had three objectives. Two of those were met by managing to find answers to the research questions. However, the ultimate objective was to construct instructions for PELUM Swaziland on creating engaging social media content on Facebook and Instagram. These instructions were constructed and can be found as Appendices 3 and 4. To summarize, the thesis objectives were achieved and the thesis offers PELUM Swaziland the details and information they requested prior to the research.



## 4.2 Challenges, limitations and further research

The research was challenging due to the field's shortage of credible sources. Additionally, the sources often differed in their terminologies as well as methodologies which provided the author difficulties in generalization of the topic areas.

In addition, discovering the nongovernmental organizations for the comparison proved out to be harder than expected. Several promising organizations size-wise had to be eliminated from the study due to their unsatisfactory social media presence. The author was surprised by how many of the medium-sized NGOs struggled with their social media endeavours. Several NGOs had trouble posting at a stable and constant rate. Often, the NGOs had bursts of social media activity that lasted for a few days or a week only to be followed by a notably long period of inactivity. Fortunately, the author was eventually able to find NGOs with considerable and stable social media presence as well.

The thesis had few limitations. The comparison of the chosen medium-sized organizations' social media status offers PELUM Swaziland and possibly other same sized NGOs more relatable results. However, applying this method instead of benchmarking the leading nongovernmental organizations reduces the general applicability of the results. In other words, the results do not represent the leading European nongovernmental organizations and, thus, the results do not describe the leading practices of the field.

In addition, the study measured only 10 European nongovernmental organizations. Therefore, the results are directional but do not offer an all-embracing overview. Studying only European NGOs highly decreases the universality of the results as well. Furthermore, the application of only two content types, informative and entertaining, offers a rather broad description of the brand post contents. It does not provide an in-depth knowledge of the content types. Further research should include a more precise division of the content types to offer results with more practical impact.

Considering the media types, the rather low number of total videos published does undermine the credibility of the results slightly in general and especially on Instagram. Thus, the engagement level of videos found within this research should be seen more as supportive than determinative in the field of study.

The results of this thesis shed light on the content media types of social media posts but the rest of the brand post characteristics should be studied in the future as well. This would offer a more thorough and complete picture of the elements affecting brand post engagement. In addition, studying the role of hashtags in social media was not possible within the scope of this thesis but it should, nonetheless, be considered. The timing of the posts as well as the frequency of posting, and their connections to engagement are also extremely interesting and relevant to the topic of engagement of social media posts.

The cultural differences of the content of the brand posts are an area that requires additional research. This is especially important for PELUM Swaziland in its efforts to create engaging content for the European audiences. Finding out the European attitude towards agroecology and sustainable farming should also be considered within the organization.

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## Appendix 1 – Basic social media terminology

### Basic social media terminology of Facebook and Instagram

#### Wall

A public area on each Facebook profile where the profile member's posts appear. Additionally, other members can comment on the content published and post content on each other's wall. In general, most of the conversations in Facebook take place on the walls.

#### Post

A means to publish content on the social media platforms. Among others, the content can be text, links, images and videos or a combination of these.

#### Newsfeed

Place where all the posts appear. All members have their own newsfeed consisting of material that their connections have published, liked, shared or commented.

#### Like

Once the users of social media find content that they find appealing, they can show their appreciation towards it by liking it. Facebook has become famous for its thumbs up –symbol while Instagram use a heart-shaped icon for the same purpose.

#### Comment

Commenting is an essential part of the interactivity on the field of social media. Moreover, members can comment on the content posted by other members.

#### Share

If a member of a social media channel finds content that is compelling, the user can share the content on her/his own wall, hence making it visible to all her/his connections and widening the reach of the original post.

#### Follow(er)

A way for a member to keep up with a user that the member finds interesting and wants to know more about. A member who is following other member on social media is called a follower. Once following, the posts of the followed member appear on the news feed of the follower enabling the follower to access the content easier.

## **Appendix 2 – Interview with PELUM Swaziland**

### **Interview with Ms. Tsakasile Dlamini, the country coordinator of PELUM Swaziland**

Interviewed: Ms. Tsakasile Dlamini, the country coordinator of PELUM Swaziland

Interviewee: Mr. Tommi Terä

Date: 31.08.2017

Place: Mbuluzi Farm, Mbabane, Swaziland

**Question 1:** Can you elaborate on PELUM Swaziland as an organization and its history?

**Ms. Dlamini:** Sure. PELUM Swaziland is part of the PELUM Association which was founded in 1995. PELUM Swaziland itself was established in 2014 and currently consists of 12 member organizations.

**Question 2:** Would you consider PELUM Swaziland as a small-, medium- or large-scale organization?

**Ms. Dlamini:** Currently it is a one-man organization but in the future PELUM Swaziland will definitely be a large-scale organization.

**Question 3:** What is the mission of PELUM Swaziland?

**Ms. Dlamini:** PELUM Swaziland is promoting ecological land-use management, mostly by encouraging small-scale farmers to practice agroecology and proper management of land resources, such as water. We do this through our member organizations that actually do the work with and in the communities. PELUM Swaziland assists the member organizations by training them, providing them with learning and teaching materials as well as exchange visits. In the future PELUM Swaziland wishes to offer its member NGOs financial support as well for pilot projects, such as the establishment of seed banks in the communities.

**Question 4:** What are the current internal challenges PELUM Swaziland is facing?

**Ms. Dlamini:** The biggest challenge within the organization and its members is the lack of funding. Some of our member organizations are really good at what they do but they do not have enough funding to carry out their activities.

**Question 5:** How good is the current level of visibility of PELUM Swaziland outside of Swaziland and Africa? For instance, in Europe?

**Ms. Dlamini:** Not good at all. Our website is letting us down because we do not have it up and running. And also the fact that we are not on any other platform (but Facebook) to try and make ourselves visible.

**Question 6:** What is the current communicational and social media status of PELUM Swaziland? How about in the future?

**Ms. Dlamini:** We have a Facebook page and we are active there. Facebook is not the only social media platform, of course, and we are looking for a chance to be active in others as well. We are also considering videos in the future because you can say so much in two-minute clip, for instance.

**Question 7:** Where is PELUM Swaziland looking to receive funding and cooperatives geographically speaking?

**Ms. Dlamini:** It does not really matter where the support comes from, unless it comes from agro-chemical giants, such as Monsanto, that would take us to a direction that we oppose by nature and do not want to go. We have been looking at Europe because one of our member organizations, ACAT Lilima Swaziland, has connections and has received financial support from Europe. Additionally, receiving funding from Europe instead of receiving it from Swaziland is highly profitable for us because of the favourable exchange rates.

## Appendix 3 – Facebook instructions

### Facebook post recommendations for PELUM Swaziland

- The average posting frequency of the nongovernmental organizations compared within this thesis was *one Facebook post per day*. However, consistency was considered important in the literature studied. Either post every other day than be inconsistent with posting.
- Prefer entertaining content to informational. According to the results, approximately two thirds of the posts should contain entertaining content, while one third should be reserved for the informational content. People often turn to social media for entertainment and relaxation. Provide them with smiles and laughs, and they are more likely to focus on the informational content presented to them as well.
- Prefer videos and pictures to links.
  - Especially videos are highly engaging. Videos found from the social media channels of the researched NGOs were not always high quality or polished but all of them received more easily more engagement than any other media type.
  - However, pictures were also extremely engaging and are easier accessible and taken. Additionally, visual content in general (pictures and videos) is a preferable addition to a post with a textual message because it adds engagement.
  - Text-only posts were not found within this research but previous studies have found posts containing text as the least engaging of all. Of course, the nonexistence of text-only posts is a strong indication that the compared NGOs have learnt that lesson.
- Nonetheless, content should be focused highly on. Pictures and videos alone are not enough because eventually the content is the key for receiving engagement, especially in the long run.

## Appendix 4 – Instagram instructions

### Instagram post recommendations for PELUM Swaziland

- The average posting frequency of the compared NGOs was four Instagram posts per week or approximately one post every other day.
- The engagement rate of Instagram was significantly higher than Facebook (198 vs. 138). Therefore, Instagram provides much more engagement than Facebook.
- Entertaining content on Instagram had almost double the engagement than informative content within the research. Users are more often looking for entertainment from Instagram compared to Facebook. Hence, entertaining content should be preferred. As Instagram only allows pictures and videos, it is relatively easy to offer followers an emotional experience even if the caption contains an informative message. People are interested in seeing the pictures of the work that the organization is doing to get a glimpse of what their possible donations could end up helping.
  - o Ideas for content:
    - Farmers working on the field with stories of them;
    - Pictures of PELUM Swaziland's accomplishments, such as dry toilets and seed banks, in the communities with the community members (i.e. the beneficiaries) in the pictures as well;
    - Humorous and educational memes concerning the area of expertise of PELUM Swaziland.
- Prefer videos and pictures to links.
  - o 88% of the content was pictures on Instagram.
  - o Videos are significantly less used (11%) on Instagram than pictures. However, the engagement rate of videos was over three times higher than that of pictures. Moreover, many of the videos were shot with a smartphone camera and, thus, there is no compelling requirement to have a high-quality video camera in use. Therefore, prefer videos when possible.